

## U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)

### PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION “HOT ISSUES” INFORMATION PAPER

---

**SUBJECT:** *Transforming the Way Government Buys Technology*

#### 1. BACKGROUND:

TTS's Office of Acquisitions collaborates across GSA to transform the way agencies buy technology. The Office offers a range of procurement consulting services around modular contracting and RFP ghostwriting, all intended to help agencies write agile, modular, and user-centered requests for proposal, quote, or information. The Office also administers the [Agile Delivery Services Blanket Purchase Agreement](#) (a marketplace to buy IT services using modern techniques) and it provides a [micro-purchase platform](#) to help agencies buy small pieces of open source code and other useful products/services.

##### a. Issues:

Some traditional government IT vendors [have felt threatened](#) by TTS's efforts to modernize acquisition. Modular contracting intentionally means smaller and shorter contracts, which are less lucrative for some vendors. [Congressional hearings were held in June](#) to review and discuss the mission of 18F vis-a-vis some of these commercial entities.

#### 2. SCOPE AND EFFECT:

##### a. Impact on GSA's Customers (Federal Agencies, State and Local Governments):

- Able to access unbiased, expert advice on modern technologies and best practices from other federal employees, without any conflict of interest.
- Access to innovative methods that can decrease procurement times, increase quality, and lower costs (i.e. reducing lock-in, increasing competition, decreasing risk).
- Build capacity to understand and exploit agile methodologies, modular procurement, human-centered design, and open source software to positively transform outcomes for stakeholders.
- Enable state and local customers to access a greater pool of shared knowledge and resources from both TTS and cutting edge companies.

##### b. Impact on Private Sector Partners:

- Leveling the playing field so that companies of all sizes may compete to do business with government entities.
- Lower barriers of entry to competing for government contracting opportunities through initiatives like the Micropurchase Platform and the IT Schedule 70 Roadmap / Plain Language project.

- Increasing the number of new companies, largely small businesses, to the government marketplace.
- Creating better government customers by helping them deliver less prescriptive solicitations and more collaborative interactions.
- Lowering risk to vendors by writing less opaque Performance Work Statements and ensuring all parties are clear on what the client intends to buy. Removing surprises will ensure vendors are able to submit more accurate and appropriately priced proposals.

### 3. ACTION(S) PLANNED OR REQUIRED:

- TTS Office of Acquisitions and FAS continue to partner to develop acquisition solutions to meet evolving government technology needs.
  1. Utilizing FAS's Assisted Acquisition Service to provide external and assisted acquisition support to the TTS enterprise.
  2. TTS and FAS will partner on evaluating cybersecurity companies as part of the [Highly Adaptive Cybersecurity Services \(HACS\)](#) process.
- Continued work with states through the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act. Beginning with California, the Office of Acquisition intends to work with the California Government Operations Agency to further the agile transformation of its child welfare system.
- [The Digital Acquisition Accelerator](#) is a pilot program aimed at helping agencies accelerate the adoption of digital acquisition practices. Its purpose is to complement, not replace, the creation of an Acquisition Innovation Lab. This pilot is a joint effort of the Office of Acquisitions, the Office of Federal Procurement Policy, and the Presidential Innovations Fellows. In June, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Department of the Treasury were chosen as the first agencies to participate in the Digital Acquisition Accelerator pilot.

### 4. KEY STAKEHOLDER INTEREST:

- **Partner agency interest:**  
There is significant federal agency interest in the work of the Office of Acquisitions. The Office was created as its own office within TTS specifically to manage engagement and demand from partners..
- **Congressional interest:**  
After recent high-profile failures in government IT contracting, like the launch of healthcare.gov, it is now impossible to separate government policies and operations from modern information technology. The government is one of the largest technology purchasers in the world, but is often the last to receive the benefits of modern technology practices. At a recent congressional hearing, Rep. Will Hurd of Texas said, "You're not going to hold a rally for IT procurement or a parade...And if we fix this...I will hold a parade on IT procurement." As evidenced by the recent unanimous passage of the Modernizing Government Technology Act by the U.S. House of Representatives, this issue has come to the forefront of civil service. TTS is comprised of dedicated public servants with extensive public and private sector

experience who are singularly focused on improving, accelerating, and lowering risk in government IT procurement.

**5. FISCAL YEAR 2017/2018 BUDGET IMPACT:**

The Office of Acquisitions is funded out of the Acquisition Services Fund and is required to fully recover its costs. There are no budgetary impacts of note.